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OUTCOME OF MEETING BETWEEN TAOISEACH AND MINISTER
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SDLP DELEGATION, AT
TAOISEACH'S RESIDENCE, ON SATURDAY 6 SEPTEMBER, 1980.

1. On Monday, 8th September, 1980 the Taoiseach gave officials an account of the meeting the previous Saturday between himself and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and an SDLP delegation, comprising Messrs John Hume, Austin Currie and Seamus Mallon. Those present when the Taoiseach reported were Mr. D. Nally, Secretary to the Government, Messrs P. O hAnnrachain and W. Kirwan, Second Secretary and Assistant Secretary, respectively, Department of the Taoiseach and Mr. D. Neligan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs.
2. The Taoiseach indicated that they had a very good meeting which had continued all day. They had fully reviewed the current situation in Northern Ireland, prospective developments and appropriate policy lines. There was full agreement that there was no prospect of success attaching to the process of consultations being undertaken by the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mr. Humphrey Atkins.
3. They had confirmed the previous agreement that the Government and the SDLP should jointly draw up a policy statement, setting out guide lines to be followed by both sides. For this purpose, the SDLP would nominate two or three people and also a draftsman. The Taoiseach indicated that the undersigned would act as draftsman on the Government side. The idea was to draw up confidential documents for the private use of both sides. These documents would not be for publication but would be drawn on by both sides for a co-ordinated approach, especially to the British Government.
4. The documents should set out a statement of the shared objectives. In this respect, the Government and the SDLP had agreed that it should be the policy of both to press for the convening of ~~the~~ conference, to be summoned at the joint invitation of the British^{Irish} Governments. They had discussed the parties who should be invited to participate and agreed that these should be the two Sovereign Governments and the parties in Northern Ireland. There had been some discussion as to whether the Alliance Party and

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the ~~French~~ people in Northern Ireland should be involved and they have concluded that there was nothing to be lost by this (the Taoiseach did not spell out the nature of involvement for these Parties and, of course, for some of them involvement *need not* involve actual presence at the conference table). They had agreed that as a prelude to the Conference there should be a statement by the British Government that would in effect signal a change of policy on their part. They had discussed various possible forms of such a statement, including the withdrawal or modification on the British guarantee. The ultimate conclusion had been that a statement convening the conference would in itself have implicit in it a modification of the guarantee.

5. The papers to be prepared jointly should present the arguments, from the point of view of Great Britain, for the making of such a statement and the convening of such a conference. These would include the usual ones. The Taoiseach referred, in this connection, to the poor returns which the British Government had received from the unconditional guarantee they had given to the Unionists. The Official Unionist Party had, for example, refused to join in the Atkins Conference and it was fairly clear that nothing would come from this particular approach. Among the arguments to be rehearsed would be the cost argument, the cost to Britain (and to Ireland) in economic, human, security terms and in terms of the effects on world opinion. Stress might be made on the one sided aspect of the guarantee i.e. the fact that the Unionists had not kept their side of the bargain implicit in the guarantee.
- 6.. Among the questions to be considered in the joint work with the SDLP would be questions relating to the conference - whether it would have set terms of reference or would be completely open, whether it would have a set time-table or, again, would be open ended in respect of the time factor.
7. The SDLP would shortly be seeing the Northern Ireland Secretary of State and proposed to tell him that the White Paper discussions were at an end.
8. The papers to be prepared should also deal with the question of what we wanted at the Conference. In this connection, there had been discussion with the

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SDLP on various models of Government and it had been agreed that the papers would deal with two options - a unitary State and a federal State. The papers would spell out broadly how we would see things in such models of Government. In reply to a question as to the attitude of the SDLP to power-sharing in the context of a separate Northern Ireland Unit within a federal all-Ireland State, the Taoiseach replied that there had been a certain degree of disagreement among the SDLP delegation on this point. They had agreed that they would not be looking for ^{full} power-sharing but whereas Mr. John Hume felt that rather minimal safeguards would be required in a totally changed situation, Messrs Currie and Mallon were somewhat less confident in this respect.

9. Consideration had been given to the possibility that an election might be called by the British Government, arising out of the Atkins process. There was a feeling that any such election would be ludicrous but it was recognised that if one were called, it would present problems for the SDLP - would they take part in the elections and if they did would they or would they not take part in any bodies established, arising out of the elections?
10. The officials present raised with the Taoiseach the question of the line to be followed by Irish officials when they met their British counterparts as previously arranged, in London on 11th September, 1980. The Taoiseach indicated that the Irish delegation should clearly give as the view of the Irish Government that no progress could now be expected on foot of the Atkins initiative. They should indicate that accordingly, the Taoiseach would be putting forward the proposal for a conference, as a way forward, to avoid a vacuum, in which violence would proliferate.
11. There was some discussion of the possible dates for the next meeting between the Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister. It was noted that it would not be possible for the Taoiseach to accept the dates of 3rd/4th ~~September~~ suggested by Mrs. Thatcher, as these dates would be very shortly before the date of the by-election in County Donegal. It was agreed that the Irish side would attempt to secure dates between the 7th and 13th November (on which latter date the new session of

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the British Parliament was to commence) but that there need not be such strong concern to obtain dates before the 13th of November if it could be established in discussion with British officials that the Queen's Speech was unlikely to foreshadow firm legislative proposals for the Government of Northern Ireland.

12. The Taoiseach indicated that the matters agreed with the SDLP which he had reported could possibly, in some respects, be the subject of further consideration.
13. What the Taoiseach told officials was fully in accord with an account of the meeting I had been given by Mr. John Hume on the previous Saturday. The only point of substance added by Mr. Hume was that when reference was made to a Federal Ireland, the SDLP at least had in mind rather devolution within Ireland: they would be concerned that the Unionists would not have excessive blocking powers. In discussion with Mr. Hume of the conference idea, he accepted that his party and the Government would be far from pushing an open door in respect of British attitudes. However he made it clear that he shared the confidence, expressed by the Taoiseach in a previous discussion, that in the ultimate the Unionists would come to a conference of the type that had been discussed.
14. I also had an opportunity, when in Oxford for the conference of the British-Irish Association from 12-14 September to compare notes on the meeting with the Taoiseach and the SDLP with Mr. Austin Currie of the latter party. Again he had nothing significant to add to the accounts reported above. He indicated to me in the course of that discussion that he proposed when speaking at the conference the following morning to put forward the conference proposal and to indicate clearly the SDLP view that the Atkins process had run its course. I struck a note of caution and suggested that if he were to do so in a very open way British officials would certainly conclude that there had been close co-ordination between the Government and the SDLP having regard to the clear notice of the conference proposal we had given to British officials at our meeting with them in London the previous day. Mr. Currie was conscious of this aspect and told me that he intended to recall that the proposal for a quadrupartite conference was SDLP party policy since their Annual Conference two or three years previously -

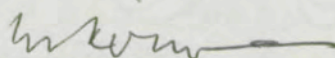
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he had proposed the relevant motion himself. In the event, when speaking the next morning he did not refer to this aspect of the matter but put forward the conference proposal, without referring to its previous history.

15. He told me that the SDLP delegation that had met the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs had been rather suprised to find the Taoiseach so open on the question of neutrality. I asked whether this openness was a source of concern to the SDLP and he indicated that it was rather a question of their ~~been~~ gratified.
16. In the light of discussions the previous day with British officials about forms and structures of closer Anglo-Irish co-operation, I enquired from Mr. Currie whether he envisaged that his party would have difficulties in respect of any agreements that might be announced on this topic following the next meeting between the Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister, especially if Mrs. Thatcher did not announce her conversion to the Irish point of view in the communique following the meeting. Mr. Currie gave me to understand that the SDLP would not have any difficulties in this respect.



19 September, 1980.